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Contact: Teresa Lee: 415.749.4900

Bay Area Smog Season Matches Third Cleanest Record

The summertime "Spare the Air" season officially ended last week with the third cleanest air quality record since the Bay Area Air District began to monitor air quality in the 1960's. This summer the Bay Area experienced two excesses of the federal one-hour ozone standard at only one of the 21 air monitoring stations located throughout the region. These occurred on July 10, 2002 and August 9, 2002 at the Air District's Livermore monitoring station.

While not matching last year's record low of only one federal excess, this summer is still ahead of the three excesses recorded in 2000. Only in 1990 through 1994 and in 1999 did the Bay Area experience summers with just two or three days over the federal one-hour ozone standard.

Historically, air quality in the Bay Area has shown steady improvement over the past thirty years. In 1969, the region experienced 65 days over the same federal one-hour ozone standard of 120 parts per billion.

There were seven Spare the Air Advisories issued this year. Spare the Air advisories warn the public when unhealthful air quality is expected and ask for cooperation by limiting activities that contribute to ozone formation.

"The Air District thanks Bay Area residents who recognized the importance of preserving our air quality and who spared the air by driving less this summer," stated Executive Officer William C. Norton. "Currently, Bay Area residents generate over 300 tons per day of air pollution from driving. If only one person did not drive one day a week, it would prevent 55 pounds of air pollution a year," Norton continued. "While I am generally pleased with these results, there is still more that must be done," he added.

Ground-level ozone is formed when reactive organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen from gasoline and diesel engines, industry, aerosols, and paints chemically react in the presence of strong sunlight and high temperatures.

Higher concentrations of ground-level ozone are most harmful to children, the elderly, asthmatics and others with respiratory and heart diseases, as well as anyone engaging in strenuous outdoor exercise.

For background and air quality information visit: www.sparetheair.org

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